

# Transition Career Exploration Workshop

## Informational Interviewing



The Transition Career Exploration Workshop is a product of the Maine Department of Labor. The ND Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has permission to add the ND DVR brand to all information.



# Informational Interviewing

- **Purpose:**

- To explore and find out as much as possible about a particular occupation



- **Goal:**

- To determine if this occupation is one that you wish to explore further and possibly pursue

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**Facilitator Notes:**

**Projected Time: 45 mins.**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE:**

**From the following slides** - Participants will learn the purposes and process of utilizing informational interviewing, job-shadowing and volunteering as additional means of occupational exploration.

Let's start with Informational Interviewing. We are going to look at the purpose, the goal, what it is, and the steps to doing an Informational Interview.

# Informational Interviewing

## What is Informational Interviewing?

- Talking with someone who is actually doing the job, full-time or part-time, you're interested in.
- Finding out all the elements of the job you're considering.
- Finding out the information you can't find in job outlines, databases, handbooks, briefs, or other places.

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### Facilitator Notes:

First, the facilitator needs to explain the purpose and difference between an informational interview and a job interview.

Purpose of Informational Interview is to explore and find out as much as possible about a particular occupation, with the goal of determining if this occupation is one that you wish to explore further and possibly pursue.

Purpose of Job Interview is to find out as much as possible about a specific job, company and the work environment, with the goal of determining if you are compatible with this specific job, this specific company and this specific work environment, for the purposes of employment!

## **Steps for an Informational Interview**

1. Develop a list of people (called a “network”) who can help you get connected to people who are doing jobs that interest you.
2. Set up a list of questions.
3. Call to arrange a 20-minute interview.
4. Prepare for the interview.
5. Conduct the interview.
6. Send thank-you card for interview.

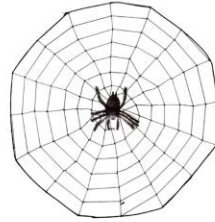
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### **Facilitator Notes:**

Briefly go over the steps informing the participants that we will be going through these steps in detail as we continue the workshop. They will be developing a network, generating informational interview questions and planning an interview activity later in the workshop.

## Step One: What's this "network" thing?

- **Network** = all the people that you know who can help you decide on your career, including all the people that they know, and to whom they can introduce you.
- Think of it like the rings of a spider web and you're in the middle.
- People like:
  - Family/relatives/neighbors
  - Friends
  - Teachers/guidance counselor
  - VR Counselor
  - People in your community, clubs, church



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### Facilitator Notes:

Remind them that this is a network of people that they could use to explore occupations of various kinds. Having questions ready to ask people off the top of their head would be great. It shows initiative and focus, which are great characteristics of an employee.

### Activity:

First, ask the group to brainstorm where they might find this kind of information.

Then, ask the participants to individually develop their own initial network list to explore occupations of interests.

## Step Two: Typical Informational Interview questions

1. How did you get into this type of work?
2. What type of training is needed for this job?
3. Can you describe a typical day at work?
4. What things do you like most/least about this type of work?
5. What's happening in terms of job availability in this field, in their geographic area, Maine & nationwide?
6. Do you know someone else that I could talk to in this field?

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### Facilitator Notes:

This is a starter list for questions, and the participants are encouraged to add to it, depending on what they want to know. There are lots of resources online and in the career center to help focus their questions for the type of occupation they are interested in researching.

Remind them that they will be attempting to find out information that typically is not found in printed or internet resources.

## **Step Three: Arranging the Informational Interview**

1. Select a person from your network.
2. Call during business hours.
3. Tell them who you are, and make clear your interest in learning more about their field.
4. Ask them if they are available to be interviewed for about 20 minutes.
5. Set a date and time.
6. Be sure to say, “thank you.”

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### **Facilitator Notes:**

Arranging an informational interview can be a bit “nerve wracking,” especially for people who have never had much work or interview experience. A great way to understand the process is to practice being the interviewer and the interviewee, starting with the phone call.

What if they get voice mail or have to leave a message with a support person?

When calling the person to schedule an interview, you may get voice mail or be asked to leave a message by the person answering the phone. How this is managed is an important beginning to the experience. Participants need to be prepared for this.

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Remember this ... most people love to talk about themselves and enjoy sharing their accomplishments. Make this about them and what they can give to you.

## Step Four: How do I prepare?

- Do your homework - make sure you've read everything you can find out about this job and the company.
- Develop a list of questions.
- Arrange transportation to the workplace.
- Dress appropriately.
- Be on time (15 minutes early) for the interview.
- Respect everyone you meet; they're looking at you, too.
- This might be a future employer down the road!

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### Facilitator Notes:

**This is an important conversation to prepare them for doing an informational interview. Preparation and Practice are key to success.**

Stress the importance of being prepared and having the questions, transportation and attire ready for the interview.

Discuss what is appropriate clothing.

Let them know that we will be prompting them to actually conduct an informational interview at some point soon.



### **Step Five: Conducting the Informational Interview?**

- Firm handshake and good eye contact throughout interview
- Thank them for the opportunity to interview – explain (again) why you're conducting the interview
- It's OK to use your list of questions
- Speak clearly and loudly
- **Listen** to their answers; take notes if needed
- Limit to 20 minutes (very important)
- Ask them for a Business Card
- Thank them for their time; firm handshake

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#### **Facilitator Notes:**

**Projected Time: 15 - 20**

Facilitators might want to have participants practice these components. You could do this a few different ways. Tell them about the reason for getting a business card – for their records and for sending the Thank you note.

- Have them interview one another.
- You might want to set up a mock informational interview by asking for a volunteer to interview you about your job/occupation as a demonstration for the whole group. Ask the group to take notes about their observations during the process.
- Then process how the interview went, for both the interviewer, yourself and what the rest of the group learned and observed.

**Include in this discussion the information on following slide about the environment, the people.**

# What does the Job Look Like?

During the informational interview:

- Pay attention to the workplace environment/  
working conditions
  - Indoors/outdoors, noise, space, temperature,  
number of people who work there, what different  
people are doing
- Remember, you want to gather as much information  
(intelligence) about this job as you can.
- Keep your eyes and ears open!



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## Facilitator Notes:

Remind them that they are not just gathering information about the job itself, but about the environment, the company itself, the people who work there – do people smile? Are they friendly? Is there a lot of work going on?

This exercise could help them expand their network!

**Ask the participants** if they can think of other things they would be looking for while at an Informational Interview?

## Step Six: Thank you note and Follow-Up

- Record as much information as you can remember about the interview and what you saw and heard immediately.
- Send a thank-you note **ASAP**, thanking them for their time and maybe something new that you learned from them.
- Update your network list.
- Set up another Informational Interview at a different place – when you have more names.

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**Facilitator Notes:** (Projected Time: 20 to 25 minutes, if this is a completed activity)

**Thank you note and follow-up:**

- Record as much information as you can remember about the interview and what you saw and heard immediately (questions for this on the next slide).
  - Do this right after the interview so that you can accurately remember what went on. We all have the “I should have said this or asked that or done this” after an interview. Write these down so that you can include these into your next Informational Interviewing experience.
- Send a thank-you note **ASAP**, thanking them for their time and maybe something new that you learned from them.
  - People like getting cards – emails are okay but they can’t stand them up on their desk.
- Update your network list.
- Set up another Informational Interview at a different place – when you have more names.

Their next homework assignment, if it is possible, is to set up an Informational Interview to be conducted on their own time.

You might spend time preparing them for this experience by having them brainstorm possible sites, developing a list of questions and possibly a mock telephone call to practice setting up the interview.

# Informational Interview Follow-Up

- **Describe the Informational Interview**

- Who did you interview and where?
- How long had this person been working at this particular workplace?
- What **new** information did you find out?
- What was most surprising about the interview?
- Is this an occupation that you would like to pursue further?



*Record who you interviewed and highlights of what you learned in **Info Interviewing** in section “O.”*

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**Facilitator Notes:**    **Projected Time:** 30 minutes if the group has completed this exercise

After the participants have completed an Information Interview experience, this session could be a series of individual report-outs by participants, using the guidelines above.

If Informational Interviewing is too intimidating, there are other options, especially if the person has a job they are interested in doing already in mind. The Job Shadow can be combined with some of the questions that would be asked during an Informational Interview.